



## Entrepreneurial project stage 5 – Customer interviews

### 1. SHORT SUMMARY

- Total duration of this lesson: 45 minutes
- What will the students learn?
  - How to design questions for a customer interview.
  - How to carry out a customer interview.
- What will the students do during this lesson?
  - Come up with a wish list of people to approach for customer interviews.
  - Design questions for a customer interview.
  - Rehearse customer interviews.
- What skills are the students going to improve?
  - Effective communication
  - Research skills
  - Team work
  - Business model development skills
  - Problem identification skills
- Cross-curricular links:
  - Geography
  - Economics / Entrepreneurship
  - Foreign languages
  - Philosophy
  - Civic education
- Materials needed:
  - Multimedia projector
  - Laptop / computer with speakers
  - Internet connection in the classroom (if there is no Internet in your classroom, you can download the online videos in this lesson in advance and bring them on a flash drive, or alternatively you can ask students to form groups and use their smartphones/tablets in order to watch the videos)



## CORE

## 2. INTRO

(5 min.)

Remind the students that they had to watch a couple of videos for homework and to answer several questions, posting their thoughts online.

On the basis of the questions, please present the following summary of tips to the students:

- What is one of the key questions at the beginning of a startup? (Who is my user and how to find out who I have to make an interview with.)
- Which is the group of people it is best to interview? (Start with brainstorming on the potential target groups, then narrow down and try to interview people from each target group.)
- How many people is it good to talk to in the very initial phase of the idea? (Usually 7-8 interviews would be enough.)
- What is the goal of the customer interview? (To understand as much as possible about the habits of the customer and the challenges he/she is facing – it is not about trying to sell our product/idea assuming it is the working solution. Another goal is to identify the early adopter who are actively seeking to solve a problem.)
- What are some good ways to find customers to talk to? (Going to events; being introduced by someone else; “cold” e-mails.)
- What types of questions is it best to ask during a customer interview? (As many open-ended questions as possible; no questions that would bias the answer of the interviewee; questions that let the person describe how they do things today and in the past, not what they want to do in the future.)
- How to structure the customer interview? (Start with finding out about the current habits of the person in relation to the problem you are assuming you are solving with your idea. Continue with asking about their challenges in order to find out if there is a real problem. Ask questions related to finding out if the person is actively trying to solve that problem and how.)

## CORE

## 3. PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES

(35 min.)

Tell the students that in the next 35 minutes they will go through identifying people they would like to approach for an interview and then practice conducting some mock interviews with their classmates.

**Step 1 (2 min.):** As a first step, ask the teams to pull out their business model canvases from last time and to look at the customer segments box. Ask them to take a look at what they wrote in this box and discuss shortly within the team:

- Are these the people who have the problem we are trying to solve? Is there another group of people we have missed?

**Step 2 (15 min.):** As a next step, the teams need to start thinking about concrete people from the target groups that they would like to approach for an interview:

- Who might these people be?
- Where might we get access to them? Is it in some specific networks in the social media, is it a physical place in our community, or maybe they are concrete businesses whose management and employees can be contacted, or maybe we can go to an event where we can find them, or maybe we can get introduced to people by our partner/mentor?

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They need to remember that it is best to contact and interview people they don't know.

Advise the teams to create a wish list of 15-20 people they would like to contact, noting down their names, organizations, websites (if available), phone numbers, e-mail addresses, social media profiles.

**Step 3 (8 min.):** Now the teams need to come up with an interview script (that is, the questions they would like to ask during the interview). The questions and their sequence should be based on the example interviews and the tips in the videos they saw for homework. Tell the students that having that script doesn't mean that in the actual interviews they can't ask questions that are not on the script because they will have to be flexible and react to what the person opposite is saying. But they will be a good guidance of the essential things they need to ask.

**Step 4 (10 min.):** After all teams have identified questions, let them mingle and conduct as many mock interviews as they can in 10 min. with representatives of the other teams. Most students will probably have time for 1 or 2 interviews, but there may be some who manage to do even 3 interviews. The idea is for them to get a feel of what it is like to conduct a customer interview with real people.

### 4. REFLECTION

You can ask the following questions to the whole class and collect several answers from volunteers. Alternatively you could ask the students to fill in their answers individually in written form in the worksheet provided:

- What did you learn about yourself when working in a team for this activity?
- What did you learn about yourself when conducting the customer interviews?

### 5. HOMEWORK

The homework for the teams is to contact the people from their customer interviews wish list and to conduct interviews with the ones who respond positively. The interviews can be done in person or using phone, skype, etc.

### 6. A LOOK INTO THE FUTURE

Next time students will be reworking their business model canvas based on the customer interviews they have done for homework.

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(2 min.)

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